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ABSTRACT

The study examined expressed reasons for choosing the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) by undergraduate students majoring in social work there. Responses of 205 social work majors to a questionnaire found that these students chose UNI primarily because of location, size, cost, the presence of a social work program, to get a good education, to be with their friends, and to continue a family tradition. Other findings indicated that 44% of students had attended other colleges previously, that many students considered other majors before deciding on social work, that 84% of the students had been born in Iowa, that 50% planned to go to graduate school, that the mean age of social work majors was 24.3 (though 74% were between 18 and 23 years old), and that 89% of the students were female. The study concludes that the social work program at UNI does not unnecessarily duplicate other Regents' programs because students deliberately choose both UNI and the social work program there. Findings are detailed in six appendixes. (DB)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHOICE:
SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AT UNI

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September, 1989

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHOICE:
SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AT UNI

INTRODUCTION

Why do students who major in social work choose the University of Northern Iowa? Do they consider other majors before deciding on social work? How many attended other colleges before coming to UNI? Who are these students? Where were they born and what is their permanent residence? What are their future plans? This report is written to provide the Iowa Board of Regents with selected additional information to assist them to answer the question - "Is there unnecessary duplication of undergraduate social work programs at the three Regents' universities?"

A one-page questionnaire was given to all students enrolled in social work courses during the period September 6-14, 1989. Though the questionnaire was completed by 289 students, this report only includes information on the 205 students who stated that their current or proposed major was social work.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING UNI

Students were asked to list the most important reasons for choosing to come to UNI. Social Work students primarily chose UNI because of location, size, cost, the presence of a social work program, to get a good education, to be with their friends, and to continue a family tradition. Students like the campus, the community, and the UNI atmsophere (see Appendix A).

Location. Most students want to attend a public university that is close to their home. Such replys as "distance is not too far," "close to where I live," "not too far away from home," "close to the family," "2 hrs from home", "not too far from home but far enough," "was close to home and family," reflect UNI as the school of choice because of location.

Size. The size of UNI seems ideal for many students. The current enrollment is approximately 11,700 students. Most private colleges in Iowa have student bodies of between 200 and 1,400. The two other Regents' universities have student enrollments between 25,000 and 29,000. Students who choose UNI are comfortable with its size, both the student population and the size of the campus. Students comments suggest how important campus size and student population are to their selection of UNI: "the size of the school -not too small, yet not as big as Iowa or State," "it was a small university," "good

size," "smaller campus," "size of student population," "smaller than U of I & ISU," "UNI is not too large or small."

Cost. It is generaly recognized that UNI offers the most affordable education in Iowa. The cost of attending UNI is "more affordable than other institutions." "It was cheaper than other colleges." "UNI was the least expensive choice at the time (1984)." "Cheap." "Financially reasonable."

To Major in Social Work. Seventy-two students or 35 percent of the respondents chose UNI because of the social work program: "I heard of its accredited program in Social Work," "good social work program," "heard they had a good social work program," "program 'was' good," "heard the social work program was good," "good reputation in social work," "reputation of U.N.I. social work program," "I had heard they have a good S.W. program." A question related to choice of UNI for the social work program was "Did you come to UNI specifically for your current or proposed major?" Of the 205 respondents who indicated social work as their major, 95 or 46.3 percent came to UNI to major in social work.

Other Reasons for Choosing UNI. Other important reasons for choosing UNI include the opportunity to "get a good education," to be with friends, to continue a family tradition, to come to a "nice campus" and a "friendly campus." UNI is the campus of choice for over 200 students majoring in social work. Many reasons were given, but a few very important reasons predominate: Location, size, cost, and a quality social work program.

OTHER COLLEGES ATTENDED

Students were asked to list other colleges and universities previously attended. Forty-four percent or 91 students had attended at least one other college but just one freshman and 11 sophomores had before coming to UNI. Twelve students attended two or three other colleges prior to enrolling at UNI. Most had attended an Iowa college (see Appendix B). Of the 42 colleges previously attended by 104 students (including those who attended more than one college), 58.7 percent attended an Iowa community college. Two community colleges - Ellsworth and North Iowa Area Community College - provided 29 students. Community college students typically enter at the beginning of their junior year. The UNI social work program offers these and other transfer students an opportunity to graduate either at the end of two additional years or, when necessary, to accomodate them by offering Field Instruction during the summer session.

OTHER MAJORS CONSIDERED BEFORE CHOOSING SOCIAL WORK

Some students initially choose Social Work as the major of choice. Many other students, however, consider other majors before switching to Social Work. As Appendix C indicates, many majors were previously considered, but three were majors of choice for many: Business, including accounting; education; and psychology. Students discover that they want to work with individuals rather than teach large classes, that a major in psychology does not necessarily lead to a position working with people, and that a career in business is not how they want to use their time. Social Work at UNI is an important option for many students, once they determine their career goals as they relate to personal goals.

UNI SERVES IOWA'S YOUTH

When asked "where were you born", 83.9 percent or 172 students stated that s/he had been born in Iowa. A few came from Minnesota (3.4%), Illinois (2.4%), and Nebraska (1.9%). The permanent residence for 201 of 205 students majoring im social work or 98 percent is Iowa. Social Work students live in 99 different Iowa communities and 56 of 99 counties; 34 live in Waterloo; and 33 live in Cedar Falls (See Appendices D and E).

FUTURE PLANS

When asked, "Do you plan to go to graduate school," 50 percent or 103 respondents said "yes", 43 percent responded "don't know", and just 7 percent said "no". Almost all who plan to go to graduate school also plan to obtain an M.S.W. or a closely related degree such as counseling (N=6) or psychology (N=4). At least 58 percent of those students who intend to go to graduate school plan to attend the University of Iowa. The UNI Social Work program is an excellent feeder school to the graduate and professional programs at the University of Iowa. Students perceive a logical transition from UNI to the Iowa campus for additional professional training.

Students were also asked where they plan to live when they graduate from UNI. Forty-eight percent plan to live in Iowa; 23.8 percent are undecided or "don't know"; and another five percent plan to live in Iowa or a nearby state.

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF UNI SOCIAL WORK MAJORS

The mean age of social work majors is 24.3; 73.7 percent are between 18 and 23 years old, while 38 or 18.5 percent are between 30 and 54 years of age.

Most students are female (89.3%) and single (80.6%). Ten students (4.9%) are freshman, 32 (16.6%) are sophomores, 79 (38.5%) are juniors, and 84 (41%) are seniors (see Appendix F). A large percentage of students become majors in their junior year after transferring from community colleges. Others declare majors at the end of their freshman year or during their sophomore year after they have explored other majors. A number of students are nontraditional as Appendix F indicates.

CONCLUSION

Students choose UNI and the social work program for a variety of reasons. The most important reasons - location, size, cost, and a quality social work program - indicate that the Department of Social Work is serving Iowa's youth, the older adult, and returning students. The Social Work program also meets the aspirations of community college students who seek a career in social work. It is possible that a number of current and future students would be denied access to a university education and denied the opportunity to major in social work if the program were discontinued at UNI. Attending either of the other Regents universities would increase cost to students, disrupt relationships, break family traditions, and separate university students who are parents from their children for longer periods. The Department of Social Work serves Iowa's residents, many of whom plan to live in Iowa when they graduate from UNI.

Does the Social Work program unnecessarily duplicate other Regents' programs? No. Students choose UNI as their university of choice! Many students come to UNI specifically for the Social Work program. Others welcome the opportunity to declare social work as their major after considering other majors. The UNI Social Work Department has met and continues to meet a vital need for countless students who desire a career of service - a calling to serve Iowa's communities.

APPENDIX A

MOST IMPORTANT REASONS FOR CHOOSING

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Number of Students	Reason
151	Location or Distance from home
100	Size of University
73	Affordable
72	To major in social work
49	To get a good education
42	Friends (boy/girl friends) attend(ed) UNI
24	Family and/or spouse is at or went to UNI
17	Like the UNI campus
16	Atmosphere at UNI
12	Liked Cedar Falls
11	UNI and professors care about students
10	To graduate from a university
6	Family likes UNI
5	Easy to transfer to UNI
5	To meet lots of people
5	Graduates get good jobs
4	Previously enrolled
119	Other

APPENDIX B

OTHER COLLEGES ATTENDED

BY UNI SOCIAL WORK MAJORS

1 - Allen School of Nursing, Waterloo

1 - American Institute of Business, Des Moines

2 - Buena Vista College, Storm Lake

1 - Central College, Pella

1 - College of St. Catherine, Minnesota

1 - Concordia College, Wisconsin

1 - Cook County School of Nursing, Chicago

1 - Drake University, Des Moines

1 - Graceland College, Lamoni

1 - Grandview College, Des Moines

1 - Hamilton Business College, Cedar Rapids

1 - Holy Cross, Louisiana

3 - Iowa State, Ames

1 - Jacksonville University, Florida

1 - Loras College, Dubuque

1 - Mankato State, Minnesota

1 - Minneapolis Community College

2 - Mt. Mercy College, Cedar Rapids

1 - Simpson College, Indianola

1 - Southwest Missouri State

1 - University of Chicago

6 - University of Iowa, Iowa City

1 - University of Minnesota

1 - University of Nebraska at Omaha

1 - University of Puerto Rico

1 - University of South Dakota

5 - Waldorf College, Forest City

2 - Wartburg College, Waverly

1 - Wayne State, Nebraska

2 - Westmar, LeMars

1 - William Jewel, Missouri

IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

4 - Des Moines Area Community College

14 - Ellsworth Community College, Iowa Falls

4 - Hawkeye Institute of Technology, Waterloo

1 - Indian Hills Community College, Ottumwa and Centerville

5 - Iowa Central Community College, Ft. Dodge, Webster City, Eagle Grove

3 - Iowa Lakes Community College, Emmetsburg and Estherville

1 - Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs and Clarinda

8 - Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids

4 - Marshalltown Community College

15 - North Iowa Area Community College, Mason City

2 - Scott Community College, Bettendorf

Note: Twelve attended two or three colleges prior to enrolling at UNI

APPENDIX C

OTHER MAJORS CONSIDERED BEFORE

DECIDING ON A MAJOR IN SOCIAL WORK

Number	Major
13	Accounting
1	Alcohol and Drug Abuse
1	Anthropology
1	Biology
1	Broadcasting
20	Business (Management, Administration, Marketing)
1	Community Health Education
2	Criminology
1	Criminal Justice
1	Data Processing
1	Earth Science
1	Economics
29	Education
3	English
1	Family Services
3	General Studies
1	German
2	History
1	Human Services
3	Journalism
1	Mathematics
1	Medicine
1	Music

4	Nursing
1	Occupational Therapy
1	Paralegal
4	Physical Therapy
2	Political Science
29	Psychology
4	Public Relations
1	Religion
3	Sociology
2	Spanish
1	Speech Pathology
1	Theatre
3	Therapeutic Recreation

Note: Eight students had considered two majors, one had considered three, and one had considered five different majors. Seventy-one had not previously considered another major.

APPENDIX D

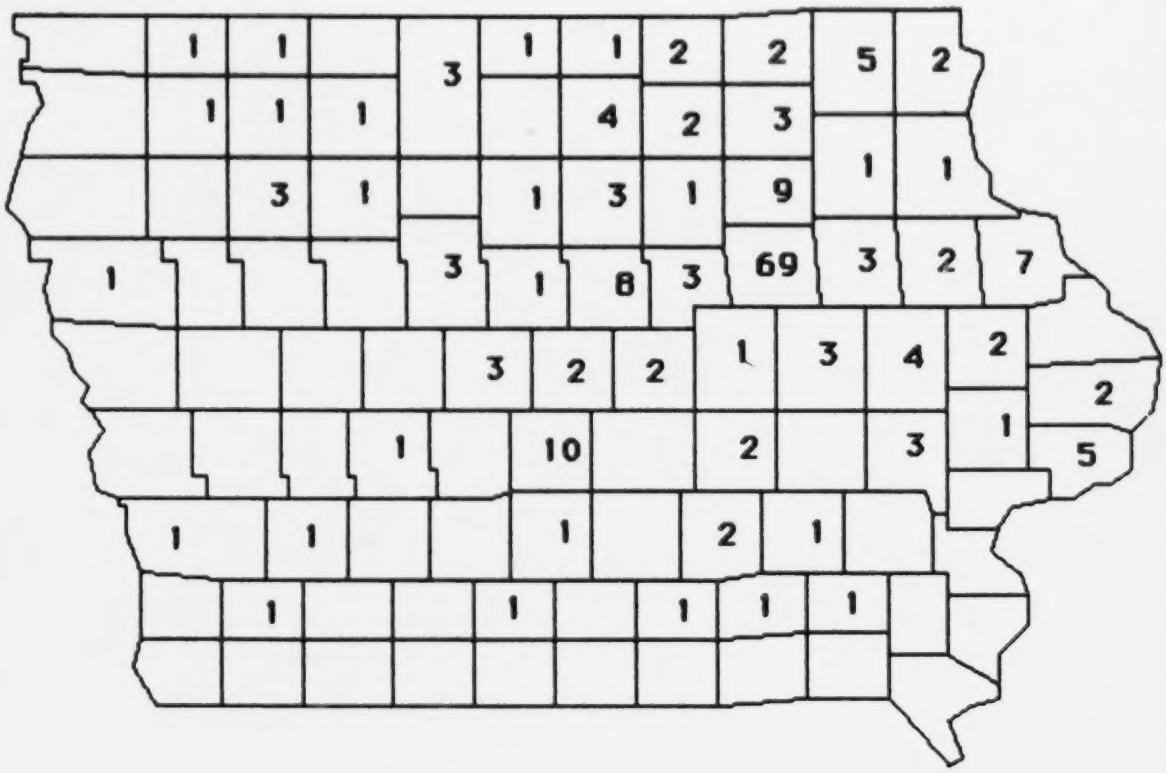
PERMANENT RESIDENCE

OF UNI STUDENTS MAJORING IN SOCIAL WORK

Ackley - 3
Albert City - 1
Albia - 1
Alden - 1
Alexander - 1
Algona - 1
Alta Vista - 1
Ames - 1
Anamosa - 1
Ankeny - 1
Atlantic - 1
Aurora - 1
Belle Plaine - 1
Bettendorf - 3
Boone - 2
Brandon - 1
Buffalo Center - 1
Cedar Falls - 33
Cedar Rapids - 4
Charles City - 1
Clermont - 1
Clinton - 1
Coulter - 1
Council Bluffs - 1
Cresco - 1
Davenport - 1
Decorah - 3
Denver - 2
Des Moines - 5
De Witt - 1
Dubuque - 4
Durango - 1
Dysart - 1
Eagle Grove - 1
Eddyville - 1
Eldora - 2
Evansdale - 2
Fairfield - 1
Fort Dodge - 3
Graettinger - 1
Grinnell - 2
Grundy Center - 2
Guthrie Center - 1
Harper - 1
Harpers Ferry - 1
Holy Cross - 1
Independence - 1
Indianola - 1
Iowa City - 1
Iowa Falls - 2
Irvington - 2
Janesville - 1
LeGrand - 1
Lime Springs - 1
Liscomb - 1
Madrid - 1
Manchester - 1
Mason City - 3
Masonville - 1
McCausland - 1
Monticello - 1
Mt. Vernon - 1
Nashua - 1
Nevada - 1
New Hampton - 1
Nora Springs - 1
Northwood - 1
Osage - 1
Osceola - 1
Oskaloosa - 2
Ossian - 1
Parkersburg - 1
Paullina - 1
Pocahontas - 1
Polk City - 1
Popejoy - 1
Reinbeck - 1
Ridgeway - 1
Runnells - 1
Sibley - 1
Sioux City - 1
Solon - 1
Spencer - 1
Spirit Lake - 1
Stacyville - 1
Storm Lake - 2
Strawberry Point - 1
Sumner - 3
Tripoli - 2
Urbandale - 2
Ventura - 1
Villisca - 1
Vinton - 2
Waterloo - 34
Waukon - 1
Waverly - 3
Webster City - 1
West Branch - 1
Worthington - 1

Out-of-State - 5

UNI SOCIAL WORK MAJORS



PERMANENT RESIDENCE 1989

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APPENDIX F

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

FRESHMAN (N=10)	FEMALE (N=9)	MALE (N=1)
AGE RANGE	18-19 = 4 28-39 = 5	18 = 1
SOPHOMORE (N=32)	FEMALE (N=28)	MALE (N=4)
AGE RANGE	18-19 = 18 20-21 = 2 23-52 = 8	20 = 2 21-37 = 2
JUNIORS (N=79)	FEMALE (N=71)	MALE (N=8)
AGE RANGE	20-21 = 49 22 = 5 25-54 = 17	20-21 = 5 23-39 = 3
SENIORS (N=84)	FEMALE (N=76)	MALE (N=8)
AGE RANGE	20-21 = 41 22 = 14 23-47 = 21	21 = 2 22 = 1 24-41 = 5